

BOATING SAFETY

- ▲ Be sure your whitewater boating skills are equal to Class III, IV and V difficulty levels. Weigh your judgment with the thought that you and your passengers may be forced to swim any rapid you cannot boat. If you are unsure of your skills, then it is strongly recommended that you take the river trip with an experienced whitewater guide.
- ▲ Scout rapids thoroughly from shore even if they have been run before. New debris or logs may produce new hazards.
- ▲ River flow levels change and hazards vary with them.
- ▲ Be alert. Stay clear of overhanging branches and partially submerged obstacles.
- ▲ Always allow the craft ahead of you to pass through a rapid before you begin your approach. This will prevent a double disaster if the leading craft encounters trouble and blocks the channel.
- ▲ If your boat capsizes, stay on the upstream side, preferably at the end of the craft. This allows better vision to enable you to swim the boat to shore. More importantly, it reduces the chance of being pinned between a rock and the boat. Hold onto the floating boat unless you can increase your safety by abandoning it.
- ▲ If thrown out of the boat, float downstream feet first and at the surface. This enables you to fend off rocks and other obstacles and reduces the likelihood of head injuries and foot entrapment.
- ▲ Boating and alcohol can be a DEADLY MIX! The effects of alcohol result in the inability to react safely to a dangerous boating situation.
- ▲ One Coast Guard-approved flotation device must be available for each person on board a

vessel, and it is strongly recommended that they be worn. Water need not be fast to be fatal - even Class III water.

- ▲ Wear protective wet suits. Bring dry clothing and shoes in a sealed bag.
- ▲ Protective footwear and helmets are always advisable.
- ▲ Include a boat repair kit, air pump, bail bucket, extra oars and paddles.
- ▲ Carry appropriate river rescue equipment (*throw bag, bow line, rescue lines, etc.*).

AREA REGULATIONS & TRIP TIPS

- ▲ Littering is prohibited. Pack it in; pack it out.
- ▲ Discharging firearms is prohibited within 1/2 mile of the center of the Merced River.
- ▲ Fireworks are prohibited.
- ▲ Motor vehicles not licensed for highway use are prohibited unless authorized by special permit.
- ▲ Camping is limited to 14 days.
- ▲ Parking on any portion of the traffic lanes of roads or highways is prohibited.
- ▲ Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.
- ▲ Dogs and other pets are not allowed to run. They must be leashed or under control by owner.
- ▲ Leave word with friends or relatives as to where you are going and when you expect to return.
- ▲ Poison oak is common and can cause severe

skin irritation. Avoid contact with any part of the plant at any time of year.

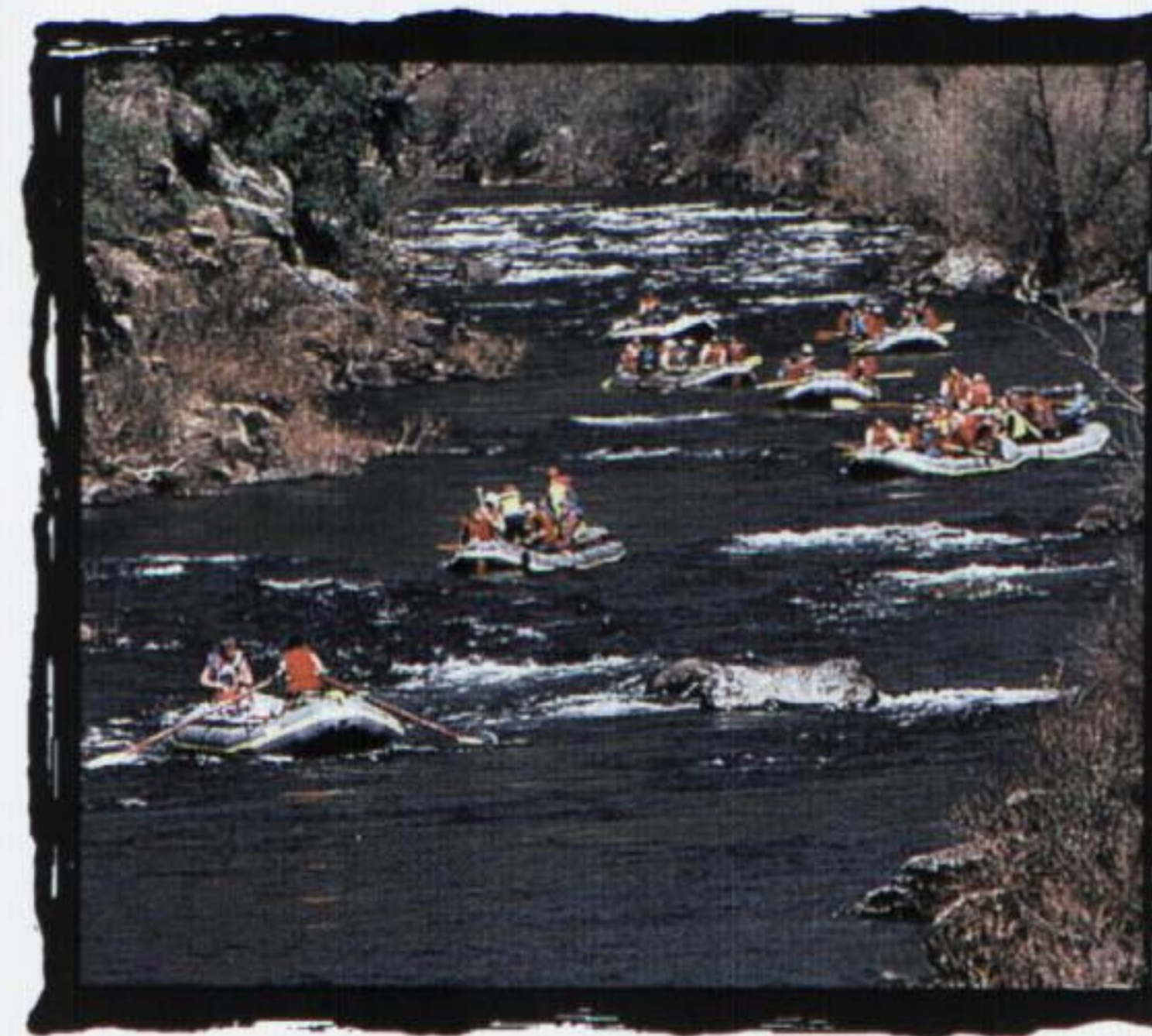
- ▲ Rattlesnakes are in the area. Be careful where you place your hands and feet.
- ▲ Observe fishing and hunting regulations. They are designed to provide fish and wildlife for present and future sport and enjoyment.
- ▲ Heat can be an enemy in mid-summer when canyon temperatures rise to over 100 degrees (F). Wear a hat, drink plenty of water and avoid overexertion.
- ▲ Bring your own drinking water or purify all water taken from streams.
- ▲ Public telephones are located along Hwy. 140 at El Portal, Cedar Lodge and Midpines.

Regulations are enforced by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service.

WHITewater RATING

The 28 miles of the Merced River from Red Bud to Bagby form a trail for boaters from early April through June. Boating trail use is sometimes interrupted in mid-spring due to excessively high streamflow. Flows in winter months occasionally permit boating, but boaters rarely make this run due to cold water and threat of bad weather.

The Merced is often hazardous and should be attempted only by those with sufficient skill. It is rated Class III through Class V with one mandatory portage (see back). Other rapids may require portaging depending upon daily river flow conditions. The following descriptions are based on a Class I through Class VI



guide established by the American Whitewater Affiliation. This is a partial list.

Class III - Intermediate: Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy, but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims.

Class IV - Advanced: Intense, powerful but predictable rapids, requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting is necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is

moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong eskimo roll is highly recommended.

Class V - Expert: Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids which expose a paddler to above-average endangerment. Drops may contain large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is difficult even for experts. A very reliable eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential for survival.

WATER CONDITIONS

Water flow can change quickly. As a result, current velocity, wave size and difficulty of rapids can quickly change. Increased water flow can cause a safe trip at one class to become extremely hazardous. Check the flows before you embark on your trip downstream. The Merced River Canyon is included as "inflow to Lake McClure."

Caution: Water level flows above 3,000 cubic feet per second should be run only by the extremely skilled boater.

Cold drains your strength, and robs you of the ability to make sound decisions on matters affecting your survival. Cold water immersion, because of the initial shock and the rapid heat loss which follows, can be very dangerous. Dress appropriately for bad weather and sudden immersion in the water. When the water

temperature is less than 50 degrees (F), a wetsuit or drysuit is essential for protection if you swim. You should also carry waterproof matches and a change of clothing in a waterproof bag. If, after prolonged exposure, a person experiences uncontrollable shaking, loss of coordination, or difficulty speaking, he or she is hypothermic and needs assistance.

COMMERCIAL RAFTING

Commercial rafting outfitters operate under permits issued annually by the Bureau of Land Management. For current information contact:



U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Folsom Resource Area
63 Natoma Street
Folsom, CA 95630
(916) 985-4474
Mariposa: (209) 966-3192



U.S. Forest Service
Mariposa Ranger District
Highway 140 at 49 N.
P.O. Box 747
Mariposa, CA 95338
(209) 966-3638



California Department of Boating & Waterways
We've moved:
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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, CALL 9-1-1

A BOATING TRAIL GUIDE TO THE

MERCED RIVER

WILD & SCENIC

